

Health Committee Meeting - January 26, 2000

(*The meeting was called to order at 10:02 A.M.*)

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

We would like to bring the meeting to order. We're going to have a salute to the flag.

Salutation

Good morning. I'm Ginny Fields and I'm the new Health Committee Chairperson. And I would like to introduce those who have made it; I understand that from driving the roads were kind of bad this morning, but we have new Legislator Andrew Crecca.

LEG. CRECCA:

Good morning.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Legislator Joe Caracappa.

LEG. CARACAPPA:

Good morning.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

And Paul Sabatino, you all know.

I'm looking forward to working on this committee. I have had 30 years plus of experience in the health field and there are a lot of issues that I'm concerned with, as are members of the committee. And Paul Tonna has given me the opportunity, after we've shared some of our views that are of mutual concern and his knowledge that he knows that I am a strong health advocate. I have some goals and objectives that I've put into a packet for the rest of the committee, and I would like the committee to review those and give us some input into the process so that we can work on them during the year and ultimately deliver efficient government services to the citizens to help make their lives healthy and safe.

We are going to have these committee meetings every Wednesday before the Legislature actually meets at 9:30; other than today, I would like to try to get them to run at 9:30 so that we can be timely. And there will always be a public portion that will allow the public to give us input that will help us make decisions. Okay, I'd like to ask Dr. Bradley --

LEG. CARACAPPA:

Madam Chair?

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Legislator Caracappa.

(*Legislator Foley entered the meeting at 10:05 A.M.*)

LEG. CARACAPPA:

Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to publicly congratulate you on being named the Chair of the Health Committee, this is my first time of being a member of the Health Committee as well. It's refreshing to see a nice outline that you've provided for us for the upcoming year. It's without question that this committee will be energized and productive, to say the least. And I am looking forward to an extensive year of learning, which is basically what it will be for me and Legislator Crecca who haven't served on the Health Committee also. So again, congratulations and we're looking forward

to a great year.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Thank you very much, Joe.

LEG. CRECCA:

I will just add to that and ditto that comment.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Thank you. I would like to introduce Dr. Clare Bradley, Commissioner of the Health Department, to approach the committee. And we have a couple, I guess, questions that are on the agenda, or at least some subjects are on the agenda. And I know that Dr. Bradley has brought a couple of officials from the Health Department to help answer those questions and I appreciate that, thank you very much.

The first thing I just wanted to bring up was the fact that with my background in the health field and in the environment, I'm hearing from both sides about the West Nile outbreak. And there is one thought that I had as I prepared the goals and the objectives on this health committee on many of the issues, and that is are we being reactive or proactive. And I would like to see that Suffolk County is proactive. We have done so many things where we're ahead of other counties, and even other states in certain areas, and I would like to see us do that again.

The first point that I would like -- or question that I would like to ask was the profile of the disease from last year; who got it in Suffolk County and in other areas, the total amount, and if anyone died.

COMMISSIONER BRADLEY:

Okay. I have a brief presentation, if you would like me to go through that; would you like me to go through that?

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Absolutely, that would be wonderful. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER BRADLEY:

Okay. I would like to introduce Dr. Scott Campbell who is an Entomologist who works for the Suffolk County Department of Health Services, and Dominick Ninnivaggi who is the Superintendent of Vector Control and works for the Department of Public Works, and they're also available to answer questions.

When we had the episode of west nile last year, the makeup of the Health Committee was different, other than Legislator Foley. So I will try to give some background on Vector Control in Suffolk County when I talk about what we're going to be doing in terms of West Nile. Suffolk County has had a Vector Control Program for many, many years. Many of the other counties in the state have had programs and have gotten out of the business when other priorities hit the scene; Suffolk County has always maintained that program. And when we talk about Vector Control or Arthropod-Borne Diseases there are two categories, those that are spread by mosquitoes and those that are spread by ticks. Last year was the first year that we knew that we had West Nile and Malaria; we had locally acquired Malaria cases in Suffolk County last year, we have had mosquitoes with Eastern Equine off and on for many years.

The other category of diseases that are spread by vectors are the tick-borne diseases; Lyme Disease which everyone is familiar with, and then the other diseases, Babesiosis, Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever and Ehrlichiosis. For many of these diseases, we have the highest rates in the State.

In terms of West Nile -- let me try to answer the questions that you asked. In New York State there were approximately 60 to 70 human cases and there were seven deaths from West Nile last year. If you talk about birds in terms of Suffolk County, the majority of the birds that were found to be infected with West Nile were from the west side of the County. By the time the epidemic was over and mosquito season was over, we had some other birds that we had found positive from

the eastern end of the County as well, but at that point the mosquito counts were very low and nothing needed to be done in terms of protection through mosquito bites. We had positive mosquitoes for West Nile from the west side of the County. We collect pools of mosquitoes -- and I'll talk about that in a few minutes -- when the State collected our pools and sent them off for testing, they batched the pools together; so we know it is from the west side of the County, we don't know the exact location of those mosquitoes that were positive for West Nile. We had many horses who succumbed to West Nile, mainly in the Riverhead area. Humans, we have no known human cases of West Nile in Suffolk County.

New York State Health Department has had some downstate meetings with the local counties, Nassau, Suffolk, Westchester, Rockland, some of the Mid-Hudson Valley Counties, New York City, talking about getting prepared for West Nile for next year. And they have created five working groups and many Suffolk County staff are either committee chairs or sit on these committees. There is one on Human Surveillance; one on Mosquito Surveillance, and Scott Campbell is a Co-Chair of that committee; Bird and Animal Surveillance; Response and Control, and Dominick Ninnivaggi is on that committee; and Public Communications, my PR person is sitting on that committee. And they are continuing to meet and they are hoping, within a month or so, to have recommendations for the State.

We realize that we needed to get started with our preparation and we can't wait for those work groups to convene and come up with recommendations. We have had one large meeting and we have now been meeting regularly, Public Works will be joining us in terms of getting ready for West Nile for next year. Both the Health Department and Public Works have gotten new staff in 2000 to be prepared. Many of the other counties, as I said, don't have Vector Control Programs, so they're now going to be putting surveillance in place, they're going to be developing contracts with pesticide applicators if indicated. So we're lucky in that we have the basis of a program in Suffolk County, I think we're almost the only or we're definitely the largest County in the state that has a program.

And our program is not just spraying; spraying is less than 10% of what the county does in terms of vector control, and I'll talk about the individual components. It's unfortunate that the spraying is the most publicly visible, so that's what everyone sees and they don't often see the surveillance and the water management and the larva siting, and I will talk about that and Dominick can also speak about that.

In terms of human surveillance. With reportable diseases, Encephalitis being a reportable disease, you are dependent on providers reporting that information to you. Last summer and fall with West Nile there were letters that went out to providers alerting them to -- not only the West Nile, but also the Malaria, and reminding them that these are reportable diseases, please contact us if they had suspected cases.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Excuse me for a second. Is this only Suffolk County providers or --

COMMISSIONER BRADLEY:

No, the whole state.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

-- all medical?

COMMISSIONER BRADLEY:

Actually, it went out from the State.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Okay.

COMMISSIONER BRADLEY:

We added a separate letter because of our Malaria issue, but there was a letter that went from the State, and we enhanced that passive by sending out the letters. We know that not all reportable diseases get reported, so there's another component which the work group is working' on in recommendations in terms of active surveillance. We were calling hospitals on a

regular basis saying do you have any cases of Encephalitis, and we would find some cases, no known West Nile. So what we want to do is be more proactive in terms of learning about possible human cases. I have sent a letter to all the hospitals in Suffolk County asking them, giving them diagnostic codes and saying did you have any of these cases in 1999. And we want to match that against those diseases that were reported to us to make -- to see how good the reporting is, the passive reporting is, and we don't have all those diseases reported back to us yet.

We also would like to do a serum survey of humans, seeing if people were exposed to West Nile were not diagnosed because most people with West Nile will have a mild disease and we just want to have some sample; it may not be totally informative, but it will give us some idea if people were informed. There was a woman who worked out with the horses who was very ill, was in the ICU, was never tested for West Nile, and at that point no one was concentrating on the Riverhead area. So she is someone that we would like to test; she had severe headaches, stiff neck, she was in the ICU and they weren't sure what she had. And that point, we weren't really testing everyone for West Nile because we didn't know it was West Nile at that point.

Mosquito surveillance. As I said, we have a Mosquito Surveillance Program, we place traps. And in the past, our mosquito surveillance was mainly targeted at Eastern Equine; prior to West Nile and Malaria, that was our major concern. We have not had Eastern Equine on the western side of the County. So when we go forward with our surveillance plan for 2000 and beyond, we're going to be doing more trapping on the western side of the County and we're going to be concerned not so much about Eastern Equine but about West Nile. We're going to be increasing the number of traps that we have out there, we're purchasing more traps to be able to collect more mosquitoes, and we're going to be changing the geography. As I said, in the past we were more to the eastern side and the southern side of the County, we're going to be picking up the western side; not forgetting about Eastern Equine. Eastern Equine has a higher mortality rate than West Nile, 40 to 50% of people who develop Eastern Equine die from Eastern Equine, there is no treatment for it.

When we collect our mosquitoes, or when Scott Campbell collects the mosquitoes, there are 40 some species of mosquitoes in Suffolk County, so you have to separate them out because not all mosquitoes carry all diseases. So you have to first separate them out by the type that they are, and then you need to do the virus identification to see if that Pulex Mosquito has West Nile or if that Anopheles has Eastern Equine, or whatever. And as I said, the other counties don't do this, they are starting to do that. Nassau developed this program a couple of years ago when we had problems with the Eastern Equine, and the other counties will be starting to do this now; we're lucky we have it in place already.

Okay, birds. We realize that birds were an important part of the West Nile outbreak that we had. And in the past, normally when there are diseases among animals, the people that handle those animals don't normally report to the Health Department, but it was an important part of the outbreak. So we're going to be reaching out, as well as the State Health Department, to those people who care for birds who may be the first people to realize that there are birds that are dying. We have been working with a veterinarian who will be reaching out to bird rehabilitators to help collect some samples of birds who can be tested for West Nile as an early warning that maybe West Nile is back again.

We also would like to do some Sentinel birds which is putting a bird into a cage and routinely bleeding the bird to see if there are diseases that are in the bird population which could be a reservoir for the mosquitoes to bite and then to transmit to humans. We want to make sure that we have a bird that will not be a reservoir for disease, such that we're making things worse, so we're working with the CDC to identify what the appropriate bird would be. We had actually done that in the past, many years ago in Suffolk County, and that was abandoned.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Can I ask a question about that? I have been involved with National Audubon and I'm on the State level also. There's an annual Christmas bird count that's done across the whole nation, it's the only real, kind of scientific survey that's done on birds. They go out from dawn to dusk and they count all of the birds that they see, and it's put into a rather large book and it's published every year. It would give a very good analysis and you can look at it for many, many, many years going back to see -- I know that West Nile seemed to go after Crows, for the most part, and Sparrows. But it would give a pretty good analysis to the Health Department of all over Long Island, New York State, any other state because everyone does it, and it

would give you a pretty good idea of whether or not it really infected the birds and killed the birds.

COMMISSIONER BRADLEY:

Right.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

And whether or not we're going to see a big decline in the numbers.

COMMISSIONER BRADLEY:

Actually, that would be very informative. Because even though this was the first year, 1999, that we identified West Nile, when they did a serum survey of birds in New York City, they found that almost 50% of well birds had been exposed to West Nile; so this is the year we knew about it, but it had probably been around for years. The State Health Department estimated that somewhere around a third of the crows were killed by the West Nile. So we may see it in something like that if we see a decrease in the number of birds --

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

I think it's worth the phone call to find out.

COMMISSIONER BRADLEY:

Yeah, okay. Similar to the birds, horses are another area. Normally we don't hear about diseases among horses. The only reason that we were able to put it together with the West Nile is because one of our sanitarians had a horse who had West Nile and he put it together. He was talking to other horse owners and said to us, "You know, we think there might be something going on." And originally all the vets were saying no, but we were concerned that there was a connection and that's how we got the testing done and found out that, yes, we did have horses that died from West Nile.

The New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets is doing a serum survey of horses on Long Island again to see of healthy horses, what percent have been exposed to West Nile; we only know about those that were sick and those that either died or were put down because of their Encephalitis. And there is a letter that's being planned from the State Health Department to veterinarians. Those veterinarians, not all the time, but that deal with birds aren't the veterinarians that deal with horses; you know, there are large animal vets and then there are small animal vets, just like there are specialists for humans.

Okay, mosquito control. The goal of Suffolk County's program is to prevent mosquito-borne disease and it's a very integrated program, it's not just spraying, it's monitoring of mosquitoes, it's monitoring for disease in mosquitoes, it's -- the largest part of the Vector Control Program, and Dominick can speak to this, is the water management; over 70% of our Vector Control Program is water management. One component of that is the wetlands restoration, probably less than 10% is actual adult control which is the spraying component. We do a lot in terms of larva control, a lot with biological pesticides. Gambusia, which is a fish -- I know I'm saying it improperly.

MR. NINNIVAGGI:

Gambusia.

COMMISSIONER BRADLEY:

Gambusia, which is put into water and is a natural way to kill mosquitoes, and that's the biggest part of larva control.

Adult control. When there is a decision to spray from the public health perspective, it's based on the risk of transmission of disease; if we're concerned that there's a communicable disease that could be spread from mosquitoes to humans, we decide to do adult control. Again, it's going to be determined what type of species of mosquito you're talking about, it's going to be determined by the temperature. With Suffolk County last year, it got cold and at that point the mosquito counts dropped, spraying was no longer effective and at that point we stopped spraying. Geography will also be a factor in terms of deciding if you are going to spray and how you are going to apply the pesticide. The effectiveness of the agent is

considered, because you don't want to put something out there that's not going to do any good, there's no point to that. And then most importantly is the safety of the agents.

And we learned from last year that one of the most important parts of the outbreak that consumed much of our time and that we need to concentrate on going forward is the educational component of these type of outbreaks. And we want to get the word out to different groups of people, municipalities, community leaders because they often got many of the calls during this, elected officials, the schools -- when the schools are open. Usually with our outbreaks, West Nile was different, it's usually in the summer and the schools are closed, so that's not an avenue.

Individual residents, how to get the word out. We used our website, we had a Health Alert Page that was instituted probably two years ago and we used that to put up information, and I don't remember the exact count but there were thousands of hits to our website during this outbreak.

And the information that we want to get out, and we're working on letters to towns, the State is working on letters, number one, the importance of removing mosquito breeding sites. With West Nile, most of the transmission that we know about is probably through the Culex Mosquito and that's a household mosquito. If there are breeding sites in someone's backyard, they can do something about decreasing the mosquito counts in their immediate area; if there's a pail that's left outside, if there's a tire left outside the water will collect and the mosquito does not need much water to reproduce.

Personal protection. Again, there are things that an individual can do to decrease their exposure to mosquito bites; staying indoors during peak mosquito activity, if you have holes in your screens repair those holes, a certain type of clothing. If they want to use sprays, that's another way that a person can protect themselves, but even with that spray there are risks and benefits to everything that you do. If there is a particular concern that we have in terms of transmission, we want to be able to get that information out to people. And if in the event, hopefully it won't happen, that we have to do adult control or spraying, we want to let people know about that in the most effective way.

Okay, I kind of wanted to do that. As I said, if you have further questions we can answer them.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Go ahead.

LEG. FOLEY:

Thank you, Commissioner, for that very detailed description of the efforts of both the Health Department and the Public Works Department with this ever growing challenge of West Nile. Just a few things that come to mind. Number one, the presentation on the screen, can you translate that onto paper and give copies of that to the committee?

COMMISSIONER BRADLEY:

Sure.

LEG. FOLEY:

That would be helpful. Number two, you mentioned earlier that you're going to increase the number of surveillance boxes; there's going to be a net increase, you're not taking some away from the south shore --

COMMISSIONER BRADLEY:

Right.

LEG. FOLEY:

-- or other areas that traditionally have been more heavily infested areas of the County. Third, has there been any change made either with the State or the feds, I know last -- well, last year the State would only take two birds from each

township, an example that some of us had given, for instance, such as the Town of Brookhaven which is much larger than some other townships, it was a rather arbitrary figure by the State to only take two. Has there been discussions with the State to change that number?

COMMISSIONER BRADLEY:

Yeah. I'll start and I'll let --

LEG. FOLEY:

And where does that stand?

COMMISSIONER BRADLEY:

Originally they said two.

LEG. FOLEY:

And the importance of increasing the number.

COMMISSIONER BRADLEY:

Right. I mean, if you look at Suffolk County geographically compared to some of the other counties, it is not an appropriate requirement to say two per township.

LEG. FOLEY:

Right.

COMMISSIONER BRADLEY:

We appealed, or Scott appealed to the State and they agreed to take more than two birds per town. You want to talk about that?

DR. CAMPBELL:

The Subcommittee of Mosquito and Bird Surveillance, they're drawing up guidelines now and I think they are going to have the first draft in February. So we'll make sure that we will be -- that all towns will be well represented in our ability to send the appropriate number of birds. There is always the opportunity -- the possibility of sending them outside of the State, finding other labs that will do it, but we hope that the State will accommodate Suffolk County and all the towns because of the size.

LEG. FOLEY:

Just through the Chair again, did you give them a number or a range of numbers from each town?

DR. CAMPBELL:

Well, I'm waiting to see what they're recommending to -- before I mention to them what I think is appropriate for Suffolk County.

LEG. FOLEY:

Okay. Dominick, to you. In the past you have been trying to get DEC permits to put some kinds of pelletized -- well, to put pellets in the catch basins of different areas of the County; where does that stand with getting the permits from the County and from the State with that?

MR. NINNIVAGGI:

Well, we have made progress on the --

LEG. FOLEY:

And just for the record, maybe you want to describe that permit process, and I know that we've been discussing this for over two years. Just describe what the strategy is to the committee and why it's been taking this long that the State still hasn't given us the permits to have that as part of the arsenal of controlling mosquitoes.

MR. NINNIVAGGI:

Whenever you apply a pesticide, even a biological pesticide, to water, you need a special permit from the State called an Article 15 Permit; if the area is in fresh water wetlands jurisdiction, you also need an Article 24 Permit.

One of the things that we find found is many of the liquid materials we use only last about a week or so, so crews have to keep visiting a site over and over again to keep it under control. There are pelleted materials with the insect growth regulator methoprene That can last 30 days, some formulations can last 150 days which is essentially a whole season. The State has had concerns about these materials which we have certainly always felt were unfounded. New York has been the last State to approve these materials for all breeding sites; however, we have made progress in allowing the application of the pellets in all breeding sites.

One of the things -- I was in Albany last week helping to train the DEC staff on mosquito control techniques and procedures and I had an opportunity to interact with the head of the DEC Pesticide Program and the people in charge of pesticide registration, and they told me to expect some movement on that. So I'm hoping that this will happen because, for instance, if you are talking about a catch basin, those catch basins, as I pointed out, receive storm water which is not the cleanest substance. So the idea that any of the things that we use could hurt what's in the catch basin compared to the storm water, I think they're starting to see doesn't make a lot of sense. So I'm hoping for movement on that, but I never say it's going to happen until I have the permits in my hand, but we certainly have been working very closely with the State.

LEG. FOLEY:

If I may say -- through the Chair. If I may say so, Dominick, we're going on two years that you and I have had this conversation, and what needs to be done from the County perspective to finally persuade the State, especially now with this West Nile situation, to get them to approve this before the next breeding season.

MR. NINNIVAGGI:

Well --

LEG. FOLEY:

What do we need to do?

MR. NINNIVAGGI:

I guess what I'm waiting to hear from them is what they -- what their decision is. The pellets, it looks like they will allow those which is a 30 day material.

LEG. FOLEY:

By when; will it be ready for this season?

MR. NINNIVAGGI:

I believe so. But again, I can't speak for them until I see it in my hand, but they have indicated to me that they will be forthcoming on this. So I don't --

LEG. FOLEY:

Has the Health Commissioner been involved? Have you spoken with the Health Commissioner in an interdepartmental way to try to get the Health Department to also weigh in on this with the State?

MR. NINNIVAGGI:

Well, I have been working with one of the State Entomologists on this. Dr. John Howard, who is on my work group in planning for control measures and as it happens, I will be writing the draft of the recommendations for that work group.

LEG. FOLEY:

Okay.

MR. NINNIVAGGI:

And I certainly plan to put into that things that are important to us, you know, like these sustained materials.

LEG. FOLEY:

Well, I think it would be helpful if, you know, certainly that this is a cooperative venture between the two departments, and there needs to be total transparency between the two departments on what each is trying to do to combat this problem. So if the Health Department with its contacts in the State, as well as this committee and the chair of the committee and the Legislators, both State Legislators as well as County Legislators, you know, we need to broaden the advocacy for this. And going through the usual channels, two years later we don't have the -- this is no criticism of you, but just that going through the usual channels, the State still hasn't come forward with the permits for this.

And one of the things, Madam Chair, that concerns me is that, as Dominick mentioned, all -- most, if not all, of the states have this material, certainly we need to have it here, particularly with this issue of West Nile. So I would hope, and those of us who live in shore line areas realize that catch basins in particular can be a massive breeding ground for mosquitoes. So it's absolutely essential that this be part of what the County can utilize this coming season to combat these.

I just have one final question, if I may, Madam Chair. That's as far as the pelletizing. There's another issue, whether we get into it today at both this committee and the Public Works Committee, since the Public Works Department is the department that has Vector Control these days, the two committees also want to get into the issue in more detail, if not today at another time, about open marsh management and the role that such groups as Ducks Unlimited and others who have millions of dollars available to help in open marsh management, and the department of interior can be of some help. We would like to have a presentation made, Dominick, through your -- by you and others about where all that stands and how that is another tool that can be used in trying to combat mosquito control. Okay?

MR. NINNIVAGGI:

Yeah. We've certainly made progress on that and --

LEG. FOLEY:

Well, maybe at our next meeting we'll have a progress report.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

I have something to say about that.

LEG. FOLEY:

Okay.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

I went up to Albany on January 5th and I met with secretary of state Sandy Treadwell, because it had been told to me that the State was withholding permits for open -- for the wetland restoration. I wonder if you could tell us, have they -- has that changed; do we now have those permits?

MR. NINNIVAGGI:

I don't know if they have the permits in place now, but I understand that the Fish and Wildlife Service also went to meet with the department and the State over those issues --

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Right, they went.

MR. NINNIVAGGI:

-- and they indicated to me that permits should be forthcoming. I am also -- we do work on State wetlands, wetlands that

are owned by the DEC, and one of the -- I do have concern at this point in that while we have done open marsh water management projects on the State lands very successfully, in some cases we're not ready to do one of the those projects and in which case we've maintained the existing system of ditches. We are now being told that we can't maintain the existing ditches, we can only do open marsh water management. And open marsh water management can be done, it requires some planning work, it requires some technical work that we can't always do. And I'm concerned if we can't do open marsh water management and we're not allowed to maintain the existing ditches, that they will silt in and cause us problems. So I need to work with the State on that a little bit more because this is a change in policy.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Maybe we should have a task force just to go, you know, and explore that issue and that problem. Because if we're going to educate our public and tell them if they have a tire lying in their backyard that they should empty it or to clean out a bird bath or, you know, dump a pale and then we have these large marshes that are not being able to be maintained, then any education we're doing in the backyard isn't really going to do anything because we're going to grow millions of mosquitoes without being able to do, again, that word proactive measures.

MR. NINNIVAGGI:

Yeah, that is a concern for us. And I was pleased that the DEC Pesticide Program actually worked with the American mosquito Control Association to train their staff on mosquito control, and I participated in that last week. So the DEC has been more and more open on these things, but sometimes they need to be reminded that this is an important issue.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Thank you. I just have another -- a couple of questions. Originally my questions was the total amount of people who were affected, and I believe you said 60 to 70.

COMMISSIONER BRADLEY:

Sixty to seventy.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

That's Statewide.

COMMISSIONER BRADLEY:

Statewide.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Then I wanted to know in Suffolk if we actually had zero.

COMMISSIONER BRADLEY:

No known cases, right.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Okay. And so the seven who died were not in Suffolk County.

COMMISSIONER BRADLEY:

No, one from Nassau, one from Westchester, and the majority from New York City.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Okay. So then the spraying really wasn't based on the fact that we had any deaths.

COMMISSIONER BRADLEY:

No, it was based on the risk of transmission, the fact that we had mosquitoes and birds who were positive.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

I guess on that note, I want to ask you a couple of other questions about the spraying because that's an issue that I have many, many questions about.

COMMISSIONER BRADLEY:

Okay.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Is there actually a County Pesticide Advisory Committee?

MR. NINNIVAGGI:

Yes, there is a County committee that I am a member of that was enacted under the County IPM Law; it's a committee composed of myself from Public Works --

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Can you just explain to everyone else what IPM is?

MR. NINNIVAGGI:

Well, IPM is Integrated Pest Management and I guess about three years ago there was a law passed affirming that the County should be using IPM procedures, I have been on that committee. Last year there was a new pesticide law passed that basically will replace this committee with an expanded committee that in addition to County staff includes people from outside the County, and I guess that will be implemented in the coming year. So we're very active in that. It turns out that mosquito control has been doing Integrated Pest Management essentially from the very beginning; some would argue you we invented it. So we work on those issues very closely and, you know, from well before when those laws were passed.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Who decides what product should be used when you do spray?

MR. NINNIVAGGI:

For most of the routine program, when it's not a health threat, we decide in Public Works based on what materials are available and the particular situation. Once it gets to large scale programs and the health threat, then there's a consultant process between Public Works, the County Health Department and also the State Health Department, and we evaluate the situation on a case by case basis and decide which materials are the most appropriate to use.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Before I prepared this, I did a bit of questioning and some investigating in Malathion, is that how you pronounce it, is that what we used?

MR. NINNIVAGGI:

Malathion is generally used for aerial application and some very limited ground application. We use a material called Scourge which is a different class of pesticide for most of our ground spraying, for adult mosquitoes.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

I just wondered, in some of the material I received, Nassau County, when they did their press releases, actually stated that they don't use Malathion, and I wondered why that was a strong statement from them; it was almost a -- kind of letting people know that they're not using it for a reason.

MR. NINNIVAGGI:

Well, Malathion has a very long history in mosquito control, approximately 47, 48 years at this point. It's an organophosphate pesticide, some interest groups have raised concerns over that class of pesticides. We have looked at this

over and over again because we want to use the material that will give us the results with the least possibility of harm. Malathion still remains one of the largest products for this kind of work, for instance, in Nassau -- in New Jersey where they do very intensive mosquito spraying, that's their primary material for spraying by the air. We chose Malathion, we recommended Malathion to New York City when we were called in to consult with them Labor Day Weekend and we used it for our aerial spray in Huntington based on the excellent results we get with that material, it's much less sensitive to spray conditions than some of the other materials. And certainly, it's very important, if you are going to apply a material in public health situations, that you actually do kill the mosquitoes.

As far as safety, everybody that I talked to in the regulatory community, EPA, health departments basically say there's very little, if any, difference in terms of human health concern among the two to three materials that are registered for this use in New York State. I think they all need to be used properly and judiciously, but I don't see that any one of them is clearly more hazardous to people than any other. For instance, in Nassau County people raised concerns about the material that they used, Anvil. So there are people who are concerned about that material, there are people that are concerned about Malathion, there are people concerned about Scourge; you can't really make a call based on those issues.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

I think that, you know, it's just a question that's come up because I've been told that it causes gastrointestinal disorders, several neurological disorders and, you know, to use that type of spraying, we don't know the long-term impact either, you know. And I don't know actually if we really know, has this been tested for all kinds of disorders? Attention deficit disorder, I mean, that's something that you hear now, it's a common word for people using about young children.

MR. NINNIVAGGI:

Well, many of the effects that people have outlined refer to what we call acute poisoning, that's spilling it on yourself, taking a high dose, it's not talking about the kind of dose that a person would receive as a result of a mosquito control application. And just to give you an idea of the safety of this material, it is now being registered for use on head lice in children because the head lice are becoming resistant to some of these other chemical classes. You can go to the hardware store and buy 50% Malathion to apply to your garden and if you look at the label rates, you can apply this material to your garden at many times the rates that you can apply -- we're allowed to apply for mosquito control. I think that these issues have been looked at and EPA is reexamining all the organophosphates.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Okay.

MR. NINNIVAGGI:

But I think that any of these materials in overdose, in chronic exposure could represent a problem, I think the thing to do is to use these materials as judiciously as possible. And one of the things that I look forward to in this year is the improvement in the mosquito surveillance, because one of the most important things you want to be able to do is have good surveillance and find out where you have a problem and, most importantly, where you don't so if you do need to apply these materials you only need to apply them where they're really needed.

COMMISSIONER BRADLEY:

Okay.

MR. NINNIVAGGI:

And I think --

COMMISSIONER BRADLEY:

Can I just say one thing about Malathion? When Dominick talked about Malathion use for mosquitoes, it's been used in other jurisdictions for other pests. And they don't just use Malathion, they attach it to a carrier which makes it stick around for a longer period of time to do its work. As opposed to when it was used for mosquito control in Suffolk County and in New York City, it dissipates within a few hours. There were some health effects associated with the use of Malathion when, as I said, it was attached to a carrier and it stuck around in the environment, but that's not how it's used in Suffolk

County.

MR. NINNIVAGGI:

Yeah, it's important to -- basic concept in toxicology is the dose makes the poison, and the way you use a material has a tremendous impact on what kind of effect it has. And one of the things about mosquito control is that we use pesticides at incredibly low dosages compared to what you would use, say, in agriculture or horticultural work. We can apply Malathion at three ounces per acre by air, so you have to picture a couple of shot glasses spread over an entire acre of land; this is a very sophisticated type of application.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

And then just one more question about the horses. I understand that last year there were some horses affected, and you also mentioned that. And I also understand that after they -- while some horses were here there were some blood samples taken and after they left the region we found that the blood samples were positive. I think this summer we're going to have the Westhampton Classic and I'm a little concerned that either when they come in, if it's detected, what's going to happen, are they going to be allowed to leave, is it going to be quarantined, or prior to them coming in, are there going to be -- is there going to be a problem where they're not allowed in, and that's going to create a whole --

COMMISSIONER BRADLEY:

Yeah. We were the first municipality that had the horse issue, and when they had preliminary results that it was positive, the State Health Department called me and said that the USDA, which is the organization responsible for the horses in terms of crossing state boundaries and in terms of communicable disease, would quarantine Suffolk County because of this; they never did that, and my understanding is the reason why they need did that is because they realized that West Nile was not just localized to this area. But that's a USDA decision and they never did that, they never said horses can't come in and they never said horses can't come out. Many of the horse owners were very concerned and stopped transporting their own horses; there was one horse that died out in Riverhead that was over \$150,000 horse, it was a racing horse. So it's the USDA call, I think they've decided that it's not just here, that it's everywhere, so they did not do any type of quarantine. I mean, I don't know if that's being discussed in that work group with the horse valence.

As I said, the State is coming down to do a serum survey of horses on long island to see what percent have had west nile. I don't know if they're doing that anywhere else, you know, in terms of the transportation in and out of West Nile. I mean, it may be that many of them have had it, we just saw those that succumbed to it.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Thank you. I think these are going to be a lot of the questions that we're going to want to follow, or the answers that we'll follow. Does anyone else have any questions regarding this?

LEG. CARACAPPA:

Yes, actually. Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to talk about last year quickly, and actually the effects of last year. And I'm going to put this in layman's terms because it's the way I did my observation within my own neighborhood, either walking or jogging.

Into the fall and early winter before the intense cold set in and we had snowfall, I have noticed within my own area many animals, dead animals intact, whether they were either hit by a car or whatever, being birds and squirrels, and an increased amount of them this fall. What I'm trying to say is by noticing this, was the effects of last year's crisis more intense than was reported? Did it last into the fall and were the animals being tested into the fall, and what were the reports of those testings? And is it an indication that it was a little bit more severe than we thought it was, and does it lead us to believe that next year will be as severe or more severe?

COMMISSIONER BRADLEY:

We don't have exact reports in terms of dead animals. We know that there are bird kills in the fall. The first birds that we found about was the last week in September, and it continued through October; October was the biggest month in terms of the report of dead animals. We also heard about other dead animals such as squirrels, we heard that people were finding

squirrels and Ginny Hens And other type animals, and we did send some of them up; none of them were positive for West Nile. So our impression is it was more than usual. Many of the vets would tell me that it's very unusual to find crows the way we found dead crows, that you don't find them in your backyard or on your sidewalk or in your driveway. So our estimation is that it's worse. My hope is that it's not like this next year. My hope is that it came through, the ones that survived survived, the ones that died died. I don't know what's going to happen, none of us know what's going to happen.

LEG. CARACAPPA:

How long can an animal survive with West Nile?

COMMISSIONER BRADLEY:

The crows were over 90% sensitive; if the crows got west nile they died from West Nile. We don't know about the other animals, we don't think that they're as sensitive to west nile. So some of them may get it and then may get over it and do fine. Humans, it's about a 15% mortality and it's mainly the very young and the very old. So there's a lot we don't know. Before this year, we never thought it was here so we know very little about it.

LEG. CARACAPPA:

I can appreciate that.

COMMISSIONER BRADLEY:

Yeah.

LEG. CARACAPPA:

And last year you did a fantastic job and your attempts to be proactive this winter are laudable goals. Before you mentioned education, and that's a prime component of what we'll have to do, all of us, in the upcoming and months next summer. I know West Nile is a disease that effects your immune system, or if you have a low immune system you are more susceptible of dealing with West Nile; is that correct?

COMMISSIONER BRADLEY:

Yes.

LEG. CARACAPPA:

I'm sure that you have plans to do some sort of promotional-- some sort of promotional concept to tell people how they can boost their immune system, who is most likely to have a low immune system and things along those lines. Because I think that goes a long way in educating the people who would be most susceptible to this disease.

COMMISSIONER BRADLEY:

Right. Yeah, and one of the things that we did last year is we reached out to adult homes and nursing homes, they were at particular risk so we tried to tell them, you know, please stay indoors unless you have to go out, don't go out at dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are really out.

LEG. CRECCA:

Madam Chairlady? First of all, let me compliment the Commissioner and your department on taking such an aggressive role on this issue regarding the West Nile. I guess my question is sort of a follow up to Legislator Caracappa's; what specific plans does the Health Department currently have to better educate the public both on not just the West Nile issue, but really on mosquito control?

COMMISSIONER BRADLEY:

Uh-huh.

LEG. CRECCA:

Because we've heard lot about the objectives and the goals here, but what specific plans, is there enough funding to do that and what's going to happen over the next few months?

COMMISSIONER BRADLEY:

Okay. Part of it is going to be in written format, you know, working with the towns, working with the website. The other thing that we're going to be doing, we have a Lyme Educator who goes out to different community groups and talks about Lyme Disease, it's actually a State funded position. We're going to be adding to that mosquito issues, so someone that can go out and talk to community organizations or do presentations, go to PTA's and talk about not only Lyme, but also what you can do to decrease your risk of disease transmission from mosquitoes. So we're going to be doing mainly the written, a lot of it is going to be written, through letters to prominent community people through the website, through elected officials. Some people have reached out to us and would like us to come and do some educational; we did some of that at the end of last season and we went to some PTA's, we went to some community organizations. We're available to do that as long as it's not overwhelming, but we can hire somebody; we can hire either a Health Educator on a full-time or a per diem basis because you don't need to do it all year round. But we've asked our Lyme Educator to start working on this and expanding it out into mosquito-borne diseases as well.

LEG. CRECCA:

Will there be efforts also to reach out to the media, say when the mosquito season kicks up again, to possibly do some reporting, whether it's the local media, the news channels and Newsday and all that?

COMMISSIONER BRADLEY:

Yeah. They usually find us, but yes, we will do that also.

LEG. CRECCA:

Okay.

COMMISSIONER BRADLEY:

And I just want to make one comment on the decision to spray without cases, and that was my decision. I had -- what was in front of me was what we needed for transmission, we had birds, we had mosquitoes. I could have waited until we had someone with Encephalitis in the hospital and then I would have said, "Well, I could have prevented that case," so it was my decision to do it. Yes, we didn't have any cases and I think part of the reason why we didn't, knowing we had birds and knowing we had mosquitoes, is because we've had a program in place to decrease the transmission of disease from mosquitoes to humans.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Okay, thank you, but we're not finished yet.

COMMISSIONER BRADLEY:

Okay.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

We have another subject that we want to bring up.

COMMISSIONER BRADLEY:

Yes.

LEG. FOLEY:

Can I follow up on mosquitoes?

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Sure.

LEG. FOLEY:

Thank you, Madam Chair. A couple of follow ups to the earlier questions. One, this past winter, has that pretty much killed the mosquito population, or what have you seen, Dominick?

COMMISSIONER BRADLEY:

I'm going to let Scott answer.

LEG. FOLEY:

Scott, if you could tell us how this winter has affected that.

DR. CAMPBELL:

The Culex population, they over-winter as adults.

LEG. FOLEY:

Right.

DR. CAMPBELL:

They over-winter is non blood-fed adults. So any transmission is transmitted from the infected female to the eggs and that transmission is generally very low, less than 1%, if it occurs at all. They have just collected over several thousand mosquitoes in Queens, the CDC and the State Health Department, they're going to be analyzing those mosquitoes to see if the virus is present. If it's not present in those mosquitoes, it would seem very unlikely that it would be present in any of ours.

In October, the end of October, I did collect about 400 specimens from the Riverhead area, from several farms that were affected. And all those specimens were negative; they were over-wintering in the end of October. So they do over-winter as adults and the limited amount of data that we have, those 400 specimens were negative in the Riverhead area.

LEG. FOLEY:

Is there any time period when you would think an outbreak of mosquitoes would occur, or does it change from season to season; would it be in June, would it be in July, August?

DR. CAMPBELL:

Generally, arboviral outbreaks occur later in the season, July is usually the earliest, September is usually the latest. What is necessary is an increase in bird populations, an increase in mosquitoes populations and, therefore, the arbovirus or the viral population increases in those populations and then you get it in significant numbers in the mosquito populations.

LEG. FOLEY:

A question to Dominick. Dominick, this afternoon at our Public Works Committee meeting, I will be discussing with the Commissioner the number of positions that we have created, additional positions in DPW, and 17 new positions were created for Vector Control to do just the things that were outlined by you and by the Commissioner last year. The question that we had asked as Legislators, what do you need in order to increase surveillance what do you need in order to really combat this problem, and you came back to us with about 17 positions. Do you know where that stands at this point, where the department -- have those positions been forwarded to the County Executive to have them filled; what can you tell the committee today about that?

MR. NINNIVAGGI:

Okay. Well, I have certainly put in the appropriate paperwork to get the hiring process started. We are also working -- it turns out that for the 14 Auto Equipment Operator positions, which is your basic person to go out and look at breeding sites, those people need to get pesticide applicator training before they can really go out into the field.

LEG. FOLEY:

Uh-huh.

MR. NINNIVAGGI:

We are organizing training with the Cooperative Extension under the IPM Law. There are some issues regarding probationary periods for those new hires. We want to bring people on board, it's unlikely that we'll be able to find that

many people who already have the required license. So we need to have the mechanism to hire them, offer them the training, get them to take the tests that you need to take with the State, but if these people don't pass then we need to move them back where they came from essentially because they can't do the job if they don't have the license. So there are certain labor management issues regarding giving these people a long enough probation that they can take the training, take the test, if necessary retake it, without being past their probation; because the normal probation is about three months which isn't really long enough to make all these things happen. But I have a meeting early next month, I'm sure that we can work those issues out. So we're working on hiring these people in time to have -- we're planning a training course the first week in April, we would like to have all these people in place by then to get them through the training.

LEG. FOLEY:

So you would like -- and I don't mean to interrupt, Dominick. So of the 17 new positions in Vector Control, it's your belief that all 17 should be needed to be filled prior to the upcoming season and you have communicated that to those within your department, the need to move forward with that?

MR. NINNIVAGGI:

Yes, and they're actively working on that. I have met with my Deputy Commissioner and Civil Service over these issues, so we have been moving forward.

LEG. FOLEY:

Okay. Madam Chair, this afternoon we'll be taking up this issue again and I'll be speaking with the Commissioner of Public Works directly about this to make sure that these positions have been forwarded by the department to the County Executive. As you know, under the County Charter, the County Executive is the one who has to sign-off on what are call the SCIN Forms, the 167 SCIN Forms. So it's absolutely critical that by the end of today we know whether or not the department has submitted all those -- all the necessary paper work to the Executive Branch, to the Executive's Budget Office, and then what we can do as a follow up is to find out how quickly these positions will be filled by the Executive.

Now, do you have names already in place, are these civil service positions; can they be readily filled or is there a time lag because of Civil Service requirements? Where does that stand?

MR. NINNIVAGGI:

Well, we do have some names, I have already had some people give me applications. Some of these will probably be promotional, so there will be -- you know, we are identifying candidates. Once we get issues like the probation and training straightened out, then we can actually post these. We also -- there is a Labor Crew Leader position that will probably be promotional. There is a Vector Control Aide position; we may change the title of that to Laboratory Technician, we're going over that to see exactly what the appropriate title is, but we are actively moving on that. But there are a lot of issues regarding Civil Service and then getting them the appropriate training to get their licensing.

LEG. FOLEY:

Well, as far as -- and finally, Madam Chair. There may be issues of Civil Service, we approved the budget at the end of -- well, at the beginning of November, these positions were in there. So I would hope that not beginning in the calendar year of January, 2000, but from November till now, that the department and the Executive Branch have been working to try to get these positions ready so that they can be filled in time for the new season.

MR. NINNIVAGGI:

Yeah, I believe the 167's are over there.

LEG. FOLEY:

Okay.

MR. NINNIVAGGI:

I know I submitted them I believe in the first week in January.

LEG. FOLEY:

How many positions did you submit?

MR. NINNIVAGGI:

For all of the 17 new positions.

LEG. FOLEY:

Okay.

MR. NINNIVAGGI:

We have a couple of vacancies and we have a couple of retirements, unfortunately we had a staff member pass away, so we need to get the paperwork in for those, all those positions.

LEG. FOLEY:

Okay. So as of the first week of January, these 17 positions were forwarded to be filled; correct?

MR. NINNIVAGGI:

I'm not sure exactly what week it went over to the County Exec, but I did get the paper work back.

LEG. FOLEY:

Okay, it's early January.

MR. NINNIVAGGI:

It was in early January.

LEG. FOLEY:

Okay, very good. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Okay, thank you. The next subject I would like to bring up is the lobster kill and how it relates to some of the other things that we have been discovering.

I grew up on Long Island's South Shore and I've seen the demise of the oyster/clam/scallop industry and now the lobster industry. We have seen brown tide and we have now discovered a new alarming organism called *Pfiesteria*; this organism causes skin lesions, neurological damage. And I have worked on the South Shore Estuary Reserve since its advisory committee and I know that the Long Island Sound Study has been working for ten years and we know the Peconic Estuary has working groups. But it's my understanding that we don't really have a good program of water monitoring on Long Island. And I know that we have a program, I don't mean to see say that it's not a good program, but I'm going to kind of go into that a little bit.

I think that if -- and I'm going to ask you some questions and maybe you could tell us. With -- I want to know that we're doing everything that we can to find all of the problems that we have in our waters. Long Island is a unique area and when we've had these declines in our shellfish industries, it should be setting off a huge red flag. And before it effects our fishing community and the resources and before we lose those, I would like to know with our maritime heritage that we're doing everything we can, again, in a proactive not reactive crisis or -- that doesn't work, I don't think.

So I would like to get some information regarding water monitoring and when we sample, where we sample, where it's analyzed, if they're sent out of state, do we have the ability to sample for everything or are we only sampling for a few things. So I would ask you some of those questions now and see where we can go with some of those responses.

COMMISSIONER BRADLEY:

I just would like to introduce Vito Minei who is the Acting Director of environmental quality, and formally was the head of the office of ecology and is very familiar with the monitoring programs.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Hi.

MR. MINEI:

Good morning, Madam Chair. You touched on a couple of very important issues that are close to our heart. Number one, you asked about the water monitoring, and I'll gladly go into that; you talked about Pfiesteria and, once again, we can touch on that; and the lobster die-off studies and we're very proud of the role of this County in taking some of initiative, and I can touch on that.

I think your question raises a general issue and it's something that we'll be glad to address. During the year when your agenda permits, I would like to come in and give you an overview of the environmental programs within the context of the very many important programs in the Health Department, and I think it would be helpful to all the new Legislators.

With regard to your original question on water monitoring, I think you're referring to surface water monitoring, and it sounds even more particular to our marine surface water; we can go through all the water monitoring, if you want. On the Marine Surface Water Monitoring Program, we're extremely proud of the County's long standing involvement in marine monitoring; in fact, we've had it for at least 25 years that I've been involved in that type of program. We have our own boats, we have our own staff that we sample the bays. In the last several years, we have indeed been concentrating on the Peconic Estuary with also involvement with the South Shore Estuary Reserve.

And when you indicate what is the character and comprehensive nature of it, the South Shore Estuary Reserve hired an outside consultant to look at our surface water monitoring and, once again, we were very proud that essentially they really only gave us a few minor changes and extolled the virtues of our Marine Monitoring Program. And every contractor and consultant that we have dealt with on the Peconic Estuary Program has, once again, commended the effort, the capability and the commitment of our staff. It's no trivial expense to contractors to come from Woods Hole In Massachusetts or Bigalo Lab in Maine to come down and have to bring their own boats and other resources, so they're very happy to deal with us; and again, it's a source of pride for us.

When you ask us when we monitor, what we monitor; again, on a weekly basis we do about two dozen stations in the Peconic Estuary. We have two large boats that go out year-round, I invite the Legislators if they want to come down -- usually it happens in the summer time for some reason, but you're also invited in February and March to go out with the staff because they are indeed sampling year-round. There's about two dozen stations on the Peconics, two boats; one we moore at Mashoot County Marina in Hampton Bays at the Shinnecock Canal, another boat we have at a private marina out in Greenport, a large boat and I'll talk about that boat in relationship to the lobster die-off.

Why we do that is the expanse of the Peconic Estuary, we want to sample all the stations, it's referred to as synoptic sampling and that means at the same time; we try to get all the stations on an outgoing tide pretty much at the same time, about two dozen stations are done. We have a full suite of parameters that are sampled for in the water column sampling. Its nutrients, its bacteria and other organisms and other parameters that are sampled, almost all of which are done by our Public and Environmental Health Laboratory here in the ME's building but part of the Environmental Quality Division; very extensive sampling program. About once a month we do the entire south shore bays. We have boats that are moored at Timber Point, the Police have been very cooperative and, in fact, take care of our boats during fowl weather, we have a couple of boats at Timber Point.

What we were hoping to do this year, in fact, we're in the process of purchasing another boat manufactured out of a marina in Patchogue, we're very proud of that aluminum hull boat, we're going to be moving around some of our resources as we sort of down scale our effort in the Peconics and move more into the South Shore Bays and up onto the Long Island Sound on North Shore Baymen's, we have another grant with the State DEC there.

So again, I think the marine surface water monitoring program will be truly county wide. You mentioned brown tide; one of our concerns is this winter and during much of the year, we have had brown tide in the shore bays and not in the Peconics. In fact, we had a Christmas time brown tide, very unusual -- and Legislator Foley knows much about this, we have discussed this several times -- Much of a concern to us. We do that brown tide analysis here in the County, in fact, we provide services to other places around the country; Delaware has contacted us, the Maryland Inland Bays has asked us for sampling and an analytical capability. So once again, it's a source of pride when you ask us what is the caliber of our marine surface water monitoring program. And it's something we feel very strongly about because Nassau County a few years ago disbanded their marine monitoring and left it to the townships and their marine monitoring program in Nassau County comes nowhere near the efforts that we do. And I believe the program provides us a number of capabilities with forecasting, trend analysis and management of the surface water. So I hope that's -- that's a couple of minutes on our overall monitoring program, but it's something we're very proud of and it's something that will continue.

I touched a little bit on brown tide. You mentioned Pfiesteria; Pfiesteria is something that received national notoriety with a 60 Minutes episode about two years ago in North Carolina.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

I saw that, yes.

MR. MINEI:

You've described the problems very accurately and it was something we were concerned with because we had heard that maybe it hadn't reached its northern extent in the Carolinas. And indeed, we heard from the people in Chesapeake Bay and if people aren't aware of marine studies in the country, Chesapeake Bay is sort of the originator of many and it's not surprising; the Potomac River flows into the Chesapeake, many Congressmen and Senators have their homes along the Maryland, Virginia Shores, Annapolis is on the shores of Chesapeake, but it was moving northward, we also heard from our colleagues in Delaware and they were mentioning it. And the fellow who heads our marine resources bureau, Dr. Bob Nuzzi, I had sent him to a conference down in Williamsburg, Virginia, and he met one of the researchers on Pfiesteria, and as we often have a lot to do, we said, "We'll take some samples for you in Suffolk County." Sure enough we did and there were, indeed, detects of Pfiesteria; we don't think it's a problem. We immediately notified the State DEC, the State Health Department, we immediately convened a work group on Pfiesteria, and we have also connected with the EPA on national funding with regard to Pfiesteria. We plan to have a very expansive and aggressive sampling program on Pfiesteria; one of those harmful algal blooms That is not singularly a natural resource concern but possibly a public health link.

But let me emphasize, what we're hearing from the researchers is they don't believe that the conditions are such in Suffolk County that we should see a Pfiesteria outbreaks, the detects are just something that may be in the background. So again, we're doing as a precautionary manner and we have a fax sheet on Pfiesteria, if you would like to have that, that we compiled with the State Department of Health and the State DEC.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Did you get a folder?

MR. MINEI:

I don't have that. Is the fact sheet in there?

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Can you just give them the yellow sheet and see if that's the fax sheet that they're speaking about? Is that the one?

MR. MINEI:

That's it, Madam Chair, you can see the Suffolk logo.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Right.

MR. MINEI:

That took the longest part of preparing the fax sheet. We had the information from the federal government, it was the orientation of the logos. I hope this doesn't foretell the cooperation. But honestly, there has been quite a bit of communication. Hopefully I'm not coming off too glib, we take this very seriously, we kind of kid ourselves on some of the activities. But I think this is a good resortation of the situation and I think it puts in proper perspective what we think we're doing. And once again, we're very proud that we're at the cutting edge of the monitoring, but the conditions -- and we're hearing it not from within our County or the State, but from the actual researchers in North Carolina, that they don't believe that the conditions are such that we should see an outbreak of Pfiesteria.

If I could transition over to the lobster study, I will readily do that.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Yes.

MR. MINEI:

I personally heard about this back in the early fall. One of my close friends is Chris Smith who runs the Marine Program at Cornell Cooperative Extension and he alerted me to the fact that he was going to different meetings in Glen Cove, Oyster Bay and had recently been to one in Huntington. And he -- if you know Chris, he speaks from the heart and his problem was that the lobster men were hurting. And he didn't see much reaction from government agencies and he asked me personally what we could do, and I told him, "Well, first off, Chris, you can tell the lobster men that we will gladly bring our boat around," one of the boats I mentioned in the Peconics we are planning to move around for more wide spread monitoring in the North Shore Baymen's, again, in connection with the North Shore Management Studies we're doing as a grant, and we will gladly help out.

In my discussions with Chris, there didn't seem to be real, strong information on what was causing it. There was work, indeed, being done in the Long Island Sound Study, some samples were being sent to EPA Lab recently, they're here in Edison, New Jersey, and we do a lot of work with them, they weren't having success trying to isolate what the cause of -- it was blood samples of the lobsters they were looking at, they weren't having success. Another sample was sent to the University of Arizona; why lobster blood samples go to Arizona I'm not sure. But there was a pathologist in the veterinary school at University of Connecticut who isolated an ameba, a parasite in the blood stream that he believes is the cause. And once that happened, again, to the discussions with Chris Smith, the role of the Health Department -- again, more renowned for our water quality and sediment samples than for fish tissue -- I said, "Well, we'll do what we can." And about that time, the County Executive's Office contacted my office saying, "We want to take some initiative." There had been some articles and there was some concern that government agencies weren't reacting quickly to it, and the County Executive's Office indicated they wanted to take some firm initiative.

I think this is one of the classic examples of something why we in County government should be proud and I think it was a quick reaction between the County Executive's Office and the Legislature, once the case was made and the resolution -- I'm looking for the number that came and was signed, I believe it was passed in December and signed by the County Executive in January -- basically directs the County Health Department and, we're very happy to do this, to get involved and cooperate with the State Department of Environmental Conservation, Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection and Cornell to investigate the activities. In fact, it was the Legislature that asked us to put a price tag on that and we agreed to \$50,000; the \$50,000 item I believe gets us more into the action. It will not be used for staff, it will not be used for equipment for the County Health Department, marine monitoring; we believe it's best used for outside services, and in discussions that might be outside laboratory with parameters that we don't do, maybe to help out UCON with the ameba, with the parasite. There's other linkages that they think might be water quality related to the release of this parasite. Why did it happen this year? Again, this ameba was well known with regard to the crabbing industry, again, Chesapeake Bay, other areas have had this problem.

So essentially, we're looking to expend that \$50,000 this year on probably outside laboratory services, or maybe a

specialist can be hired. There was an article recently about the need for this kind of specialist, it's something that Chris Smith and I have been talking about for weeks, that possibly we could have this kind of a Lobster Outreach Coordinator, Research Coordinator, and possibly a Veterinary Pathologist to be on staff there.

So again, I think we're moving quickly. There's going to be -- this resolution requires us to come back to you before April to discuss the progress on this kind of work; we will, once again, gladly do that. I just wanted to alert you to the fact that there is going to be a meeting in the middle of February among the State DEC and our agency to discuss a work plan to better address this lobster die-off study. But we are indeed involved in that situation.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

I think also my concern is that -- and I commend you, I think that we do -- I happen to think Suffolk County is above most places anyway, but I want to keep it there as far as I can have any part in doing. But I wondered if there might not be some type of cooperation within all of the agencies, or even more money given to Suffolk County to -- because our needs are -- it seems we need it more, just the fact that

we're an Island and that we do have tourism and we do have this commercial --

the question I guess that I'm asking is do we need something here on Long Island that we don't have to send it out, that we could test for everything not just -- again, reactive rather than proactive. Is there more that we can be doing not just with what we have, but should we be reaching out to get more, to do more, to provide more?

MR. MINEI:

I would say yes to that. The best example I have is the brown tide research. For about ten years that research was handled like a lot of scientist research is done, a lot of medical research is done, sort of in disparate areas by researchers really keeping their results pretty close to the vests until they published. And there was a lot of concern generated by the public and by this body as well as the County Executive's Office to get a more coordinated effort going on brown tide research, and we had that as a result of a major work shop in '95. I believe this working group in February and the County Executive's Office is indicating that maybe this is the best way to identify the needs. You can see as the articles unfold on this that we're still kind of guessing what the problem is, and we don't want to go through repeating the history of brown tide where it took us ten years to literally get the act together. This is something that the people are hurting with now. The article in today's Newsday looks like the lobstermen may be receiving disaster relief money. So, I mean, this is a serious situation that -- again, a lot of our staff do a lot of lobstering and fishing around here, so they're not only professionally committed but they're personally involved in these kind of activities.

But to answer your question, yes, what the character of that response would be, I can't really give you an answer right now. But I believe we're heading in the right direction, bringing together more and more experts from outside this area to identify what we need here on Eastern Long Island.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

I would ask that as you discover what you think, you know, based on what we've just discussed now, you'll come to us again and, you know, give us your input and if we can in any way help to stop anything from happening in the future. Legislator Foley I think has a question.

LEG. FOLEY:

Thank you, Madam Chair. Vito, you mentioned earlier that you'll be increasing the testing, surveillance on the Great South Bay and on the Sound; in what ways are you going to be doing that, and what areas are you going to be doing that?

MR. MINEI:

Well, again, Legislator Foley, this is a subject you and I have discussed for a while.

LEG. FOLEY:

Right.

MR. MINEI:

And you've been very supportive and I want to take this opportunity to thank you. We're in the process of purchasing another boat.

LEG. FOLEY:

Okay.

MR. MINEI:

Part of that commitment, in the discussions with Legislative Budget Review, was staffing, we're in the process of acquiring the additional staff necessary for those boats. Again, there are a few things happening. We're reducing our very intensive and comprehensive efforts in the Peconics, it won't be done every week as we move past the management plan for that. We will have large boats in the Great South Bay at Timber Point, as well as Mashutt County Marina in Hampton Bays to do the entire --

LEG. FOLEY:

So in other words, there will be additional county assets --

MR. MINEI:

Right.

LEG. FOLEY:

-- staffing, boats within that body of water.

MR. MINEI:

Right.

LEG. FOLEY:

And they will be testing for brown tide?

MR. MINEI:

Nutrients, bacteria, all the parameters we've done routinely.

LEG. FOLEY:

Okay.

MR. MINEI:

Again, very comprehensive suite of parameters.

LEG. FOLEY:

Okay.

MR. MINEI:

Something, again, we're very proud with our laboratory research.

LEG. FOLEY:

And the same holds true for the sound?

MR. MINEI:

Yes. Basically, what happens now is, in essence, you have to follow the evolution of the Long Island Sound Study. It's been pretty much a main body of the sound for the last ten, twelve years, now they're looking at the peripheral and Baymen's and that's where our sampling resources come in with Port Jeff Harbor, Huntington/Northport Complex, Mt. Sinai and others. So we're moving boats up in there to do the sampling and we're also increasing our laboratory staff and capabilities.

LEG. FOLEY:

Very good. Well, Madam Chair, that certainly is good news to start the new year. Not that testing hasn't been done in the past, but as a matter of fact, the department will be intensifying, accelerating their testing, a variety of parameters in the district that I represent and you represent and others represent on the south shore, but also they will be intensifying their efforts on the bays and embankments of the sound as well. So that's good news, I'm glad to hear it.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Thank you.

LEG. FOLEY:

And I'm glad you're buying some local boats, too, that's great.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Thank you very much. Does anyone else have any other questions? Good. I appreciate you coming down and we will be in touch, I'm sure, many times.

MR. MINEI:

My pleasure. Good luck.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Thank you very much. Okay, we have an agenda someplace.

Introductory Resolutions

1000-00 (P) - Renaming the Southampton Satellite Health Center the "Kraus Family Satellite Health Center of Southampton" (Guldi).

LEG. FOLEY:

I will make a motion to approve.

LEG. CARACAPPA:

Second.

MR. SABATINO:

Just for the record, Madam Chairman, there is a corrected copy that was filed in a timely fashion to delete reference to a satellite at the request of the -- I believe it was the hospital as well as the Health Commissioner, and the language in the sign will correspond to that. So there is a corrected copy, it's eligible for a vote.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Okay, thank you. All in favor? Opposed?

LEG. CRECCA:

Aye.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Okay, passed. (Vote: 4-0-0-1 Not Present: Legislator Caracciolo).

1008-00 (P) - Establishing Pulmonary Awareness Policy for Suffolk County Health Care Providers (Haley).

LEG. CARACAPPA:

Motion.

MR. SABATINO:

Excuse me, Madam Chairman. There is also a corrected copy on this legislation to narrow the scope. The bill was originally filed when it provided for the information to be provided to all patients, that portion has been deleted so it will be limited to the doctors. Again, I think that was at the request of Health to the sponsors of the bill. It was done and it was filed in a timely fashion.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

In favor?

LEG. CRECCA:

Aye.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Opposed? **It passes (Vote: 4-0-0-1 Not Present: Legislator Caracciolo).**

Introductory Sense Resolutions

Sense 3-2000 - Memorializing Sense Resolution requesting the State of New York to require disclosure of nurse-to-patient care ratios of all Suffolk County Hospitals and Medical Centers (Bishop).

LEG. FOLEY:

Motion.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Second?

LEG. CRECCA:

Second.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

In favor? Opposed? **Passed (Vote: 4-0-0-1 Not Present: Legislator Caracciolo).**

Sense 4-2000 - Memorializing Sense Resolution permanently designating Primary Pulmonary Hypertension Awareness Week in Suffolk County in memory of Tara Marie Gagliano (Haley)

LEG. CARACAPPA:

Motion.

LEG. CRECCA:

Second.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

All in favor? Opposed? **Passed (Vote: 4-0-0-1 Not Present: Legislator Caracciolo).**

The meeting is adjourned.

LEG. CARACAPPA:

Great.

LEG. CRECCA:

Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Thank you.

(*The meeting was adjourned at 11:26 A.M.*)

Legislator Ginny Fields

Chairperson/Health committee